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# Positive and Negative Self-Esteem Among Ethnic Minority Early Adolescents: Social and Cultural Sources and Threats

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This paper uses data from a large-scale study ( $N = 1070$ ) of Turkish and Moroccan early adolescents in the Netherlands. In it, it was found that a distinction between positive and negative self-esteem as 2 relatively independent dimensions of global self-esteem could be made. Other results were that ethnic identification and family integrity as an individual tendency toward collectivism turned out to be positively related to positive self-esteem. On the other hand, peer discrimination and intergenerational discrepancies in attitude toward Dutch cultural practices appeared to be related to lowered positive self-esteem and enhanced negative self-esteem. These relationships were similar for both groups of participants. However, the Moroccans had higher positive self-esteem and lower negative self-esteem. Furthermore, the Moroccans identified more strongly with their ethnic group and reported more intergenerational cultural discrepancies, whereas the Turks experienced more discrimination and valued family integrity more. It is concluded that, in addition to the differential resources and threats, the examination of these 2 dimensions of self-esteem can improve our understanding of the development of self-evaluation by ethnic minority youth.

**KEY WORDS:** ethnic minorities; self-esteem.

For several decades now, the global self-esteem of racial and ethnic minority youth has been a subject of great interest. Self-esteem is widely recognized as being central to the self-concept, to psychological functioning and well-being, and is strongly related to many other variables, such as general life satisfaction, anomie, and hostility (see Kaplan, 1982; Rosenberg, 1985).

However, there are a number of limitations in existing research on race and ethnicity and global self-esteem. First of all, self-esteem has been predominantly studied among middle and late adolescents; there are relatively few studies conducted among children and early adolescents. Second, global self-esteem among ethnic minorities is typically examined in relation to either neg-

ative social experiences such as prejudice and discrimination or in relation to conflicting cultural demands and expectations. The former aspect is emphasized in social-psychological approaches whereas the latter one is more central in (cross-)cultural psychology. What is lacking are studies that take these 2 explanations into account simultaneously. In addition, most studies focus on factors that are either a burden for self-esteem, such as discrimination, or a source for self-esteem, such as family support. In order to improve our understanding of self-esteem among ethnic minority youth, however, both kinds of factors should be considered. Finally, existing research is limited because it predominantly treats global self-esteem as a unitary construct and does not distinguish between negative and positive dimensions of self-esteem.

The present study addresses these 4 points by examining ethnicity and positive and negative self-esteem among 1070 early adolescents (aged 10–13) from Turkish and Moroccan descent living in the Netherlands. There were 2 reasons for focusing on these 2 groups. Islamic Turks and Moroccans are the 2 minority groups that are evaluated most negatively in the Netherlands and that face

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most discrimination (Hagendoorn 1995; Verkuyten and Kinket, 2000). Also, these groups stem from more traditional collectivist cultures but are living in an individualistic western European country (Hofstede, 1980). This situation may lead to conflicting cultural demands affecting self-esteem. By focusing on both the perception of ethnic discrimination and on perceived intergenerational cultural discrepancies, the present study addresses the relative importance of these 2 aversive conditions to global self-esteem. In addition, it is examined whether ethnic identification and values concerning family integrity make a positive contribution to global self-esteem.

### POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SELF-ESTEEM

The notion of global self-esteem refers to the overall evaluation of oneself as a person, or how one feels about oneself in a comprehensive sense. Harter (1999) has shown that children as young as 8 years make judgments of global self-esteem that can be distinguished from evaluation attached to specific characteristics of the self.

There is an ongoing debate about whether global self-esteem is a unidimensional construct or whether it consists of a positive self-concept dimensions (contentment with self) and a negative self-concept dimension (depreciation or dissatisfaction with self). This debate is particularly conducted in relation to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965). Several studies have asserted that the RSE is unidimensional (e.g., Hensley and Roberts, 1976; Marsh, 1996). However, other researchers have revealed both a positive and a negative factor of this scale (e.g., Bachman and O'Malley, 1986; Carmines and Zeller, 1979; Owens, 1993, 1994), which has also been found in cross-cultural research (Farruggia *et al.*, 2001).

In addition, construct validation suggests that both self-esteem dimensions are distinguished by their differential association with other measures (e.g., Mortiner *et al.*, 1992). For example, Owens (1994) in a longitudinal study of adolescents, found that particularly negative self-esteem was related to depressive symptomatology. Positive self-esteem has been found to be related to indicators of self-development and personal behavior (Owens, 1993), and in various cultures to subjective well-being (Lucas *et al.*, 1996). The present study examined Rosenberg-type global self-esteem. Positive and negative self-esteem were expected to be distinguished empirically. In addition, aversive experiences as well as sources of global self-esteem were examined.

An asymmetry of positive and negative events has been noted for many different phenomena (see Leary and Baumeister, 2000; Rozin and Royzman, 2001). In general,

favorable events are pleasant but have a less stronger and less generalized emotional impact than negative reactions and experiences that are much rarer. Leary *et al.* (1995), for example, found self-esteem to be lowered more by social exclusion than it was enhanced by inclusion. People are sensitive to threats to the self, as these are, in general, more exceptional and have a more generalized aversive effect on both positive and negative self-feelings. In contrast, favorable events are considered less diagnostic than negative ones and are thought to predominantly affect positive feelings. Hence, negative experiences (discrimination and intergenerational cultural conflicts) were expected to affect adversely both positive and negative self-esteem. However, ethnic identification and family integrity as sources for self-esteem were expected to be particularly related to positive self-esteem as opposed to negative self-esteem.

### ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION AND FAMILY INTEGRITY

An understanding of ethnic minority groups requires explicit attention to social circumstances in addition to cultural characteristics (Keefe, 1992). Hence, both the "minority" and the "ethnic" aspects of ethnic minorities need to be taken into consideration (Hutnik, 1991). The former aspect is typically examined by social psychologists who, when doing so, focus on minority status and social identification. The latter aspect is examined in cross-cultural psychology and in research on acculturation. There are social as well as cultural factors that may function as sources for global self-esteem of ethnic minority early adolescents. The present study examines the role of ethnic identification and of family integrity as a central aspect of cultural tendencies toward collectivism.

#### Ethnic Identification

In social psychology, social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) argues that a sense of group belonging is implicated in the psychological well-being of ethnic group members. Ethnic identification may play an important role in the self-concept because people attribute value to their ethnic group and derive self-esteem from their sense of belonging.

Empirically, various studies, also of youngsters in the Netherlands, have found that ethnic identity is psychologically more salient and important to ethnic minorities than it is to their majority group contemporaries (see Verkuyten, 1999). Hence, ethnicity is a more distinctive aspect of identity for minorities than for the majority group.

Furthermore, ethnic minority identification has been found to be a source of global personal self-esteem and psychological well-being (see Porter and Washington, 1993). For example, among African Americans, Latinos, and Whites, Phinney *et al.* (1997) found ethnic identification to be a strong positive predictor of self-esteem (see also Branscombe *et al.*, 1999; Martinez and Dukes, 1997; Rowley *et al.*, 1998). Another example, is presented by a study by Verkuyten (2001) of Turkish early adolescents in the Netherlands. For this group, ethnic identification contributed positively to the prediction of global self-esteem.

Hence, in the present study, stronger ethnic identification was expected to contribute to the development of positive self-esteem. No relationship was expected between ethnic identification and negative self-esteem.

### Family Integrity

Parental approval, support, and acceptance as well as family harmony are most predictive for global self-esteem, at least through adolescence (Harter, 1999). The importance of parental nurturance and family harmony to self-esteem is found in various (western and eastern) countries (e.g., Herz and Gullone, 1999; Scott *et al.*, 1991; Shek, 1999), and among both ethnic majority and minority group members (e.g., Greenberger and Chen, 1996; Hughes and Demo, 1989). Early childhood socialization leads to the development of a more or less positive self-evaluation. Furthermore, ethnic minority families are able to filter out racist and discriminatory messages from the dominant community and provide positive feedback that will enhance self-esteem (Barnes, 1980).

In addition, relevant cultural values may also affect self-esteem. At the individual level, positive correlations have been found between collectivism and psychological well-being. Triandis *et al.* (1985) reported that collectivists in the United States know little anxiety, alienation, and loneliness. In the Netherlands, Verkuyten and Kwa (1994) found a positive correlation between collectivism and life satisfaction among Chinese adolescents. Furthermore, Verkuyten (2001) found a positive correlation among Turkish early adolescents between global self-esteem and cultural tendencies toward collectivism (see also Phalet and Hagendoorn, 1996). Hence, high collectivists who value their in-group may experience more social support and a more positive sense of self than low collectivists.

Cultural tendencies toward collectivism can be split up in different aspects as subordination of personal goals to the goals of others, concern for the in-group, interde-

pendence and sociability, and family integrity. Collectivist cultures emphasize the interconnected nature of the self, group solidarity and sharing, stable and predetermined relationships, and family harmony and dependency (e.g., Triandis, 1994; Triandis *et al.*, 1990). Family integrity is probably also one of the most meaningful dimensions for children, and its importance has been highlighted in cross-cultural work and in relation to acculturation processes and immigrant experiences (Kagitcibasi, 1990; Lay *et al.*, 1998). The present study focuses on family integrity, which was expected to be positively related to positive global self-esteem.

### DISCRIMINATION AND CULTURAL CONFLICTS

Global feelings of self-worth are derived from social identity and cultural sources, but social and cultural factors may also threaten the self-esteem of ethnic minority group members. In social psychology, the emphasis is on negative social experiences, such as being discriminated. In acculturation studies, the focus is on cultural change and conflict. All of these factors can be expected to affect global self-esteem adversely. Here, the focus is on perceived ethnic peer discrimination and on perceived parent-child discrepancies in the evaluation of Dutch cultural practices.

### Perceived Discrimination

In social psychology the focus is on the status position of ethnic minority groups and associated predicaments of negative stereotypes, discrimination, and forms of racism. Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), for example, addresses the question of the psychological effects of minority membership with respect to the threat to social identity implied by a minority position.

Experiences with ethnic discrimination may well have negative repercussions for the way minority members feel about themselves. Empirical evidence has been found for different countries showing a negative relationship between racist or ethnic discrimination and self-esteem, for example the United States (e.g., Finch *et al.*, 2000), Canada (e.g., Noh *et al.*, 1999), Finland (e.g., Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000), and the Netherlands (e.g., Koomen and Fränkel, 1992). However, these studies were all conducted with adults and late adolescents. There are only a few studies of younger adolescents. One example is presented by Rumbaut (1995) who, in southern California and South Florida, studied a sample of over

5000 immigrant adolescents between 14 and 15 years of age. He found that perceived discrimination elevated depressive symptoms, and that anticipated discrimination was significantly associated with decreased global self-worth.

The present study has looked at the frequency of experiences with racist name-calling and social exclusion by peers. Name calling has been found to be the most common form of peer victimization among early adolescents, as is being excluded from social groups (e.g., Smith and Shu, 2000; Whitney and Smith, 1993). Furthermore, these forms of behavior are typically interpreted as discriminatory by children themselves (Verkuyten *et al.*, 1997). This understanding of discrimination in terms of peer relations may be important for self-esteem. Studies by Harter (1999) have shown that (dis)approval from peers such as classmates is far more predictive of global self-esteem than is (dis)approval from close friends. In the present study, perceived discrimination was expected to affect both positive and negative self-esteem adversely.

### Perceived Intergenerational Cultural Conflicts

For many ethnic minority groups around the world, and especially for children of migrants, there is the question of how to deal with conflicting cultural norms and values of the majority versus those of their own minority culture. Minority youth is thought to develop within the experience of the pressure of different value and belief systems, derived mainly from the traditional culture of the parents on the one hand, and from the culture of the host country on the other. Immigrant adolescents often feel conflict with their parents over values and practices (Szapocznik and Kurtenis, 1993). Acculturation studies have found that the first generation is more concerned with maintaining the heritage culture, whereas later generations focus more on cultural adaptation (e.g., Knafo and Schwartz, 2001; Phinney *et al.*, 2000; Rosenthal *et al.*, 1996). For example, ethnic minority group parents in the Netherlands are, in general, very concerned about transmitting their traditions and cultural values to their children. Within the Turkish and Moroccan community, parent-child relationships are strongly affected by what is considered appropriate cultural behavior, as parents do not want their children to "Dutchify" (e.g., Nijsten, 1998; Pels, 1999). In contrast, children are exposed to mainstream values and practices in school, by their peers and through the media. As a result, there is often a pattern of "dissonant acculturation" (Portes, 1997) whereby children adapt to the dominant culture at a faster rate than adults. The present study examined perceived parent-child dis-

crepancies in the evaluation of Dutch cultural practices. Within collectivist minority groups, these discrepancies may be little accepted because of the norm of respect for elders and obedience to authority. Therefore, discrepancy is a potential source of difficulty that is likely to lead to cultural conflicts and dissatisfaction (Rosenthal *et al.*, 1996). Hence, intergenerational discrepancy was expected to affect adversely both positive and negative self-esteem.

To summarize, the following expectations, as derived from our discussion, have been examined among early adolescents from Turkish and Moroccan descent living in the Netherlands. First of all, positive and negative self-esteem were expected to be empirically distinct dimensions of global self-esteem. Second, ethnic identification and family integrity were expected to result in enhanced positive self-esteem but not so much in lowering negative self-esteem. Finally, perceived ethnic discrimination by peers and intergenerational cultural conflicts were expected to affect both positive and negative self-esteem adversely.

## METHOD

### Participants

In total, 1070 early adolescents between 10 and 13 years of age participated. The number of participants with 2 Turkish parents and that described themselves as Turkish was 610 (57%), and 460 participants described themselves as Moroccan and had parents of Moroccan origin (43%). Fifty percent of the participants were girls. There was no significant difference between Turkish and Moroccan participants for gender,  $\chi^2(1, 1070) = 1.27$ ,  $p > 0.10$ , nor for age,  $\chi^2(1, 1070) = 1.16$ ,  $p > 0.10$ . Eleven percent of the participants was 10 years of age, 37% was 11 years, 42% was 12 years, and 10% was 13 years of age. The mean age was 11.52 (SD = 0.81). The study was carried out in 77 primary schools. The schools form a cross-section and were to be found in 30 different cities in all regions of the country. The participants completed a short questionnaire under the supervision of their teacher. There was no information available on the parents, nor on the exact generation of the participants. However, in the Netherlands, most Turks and Moroccans have a low socioeconomic position and most of their early adolescents are second generation. Furthermore, in contrast to adults and older adolescents, no clear relationship between social class and self-esteem has been found for early adolescents (Demo and Savin-Williams, 1983; Rosenberg and Pearlin, 1978; Wiltfang and Scarbecz, 1990).

## Questionnaire Measures

Ten self-esteem indicators were used drawing on highly similar inventories by Rosenberg (1965) and Piers and Harris (Piers, 1984). Both inventories range among the 4 most used instruments for assessing ethnic differences in self-esteem (Gray-Little and Hafdahl, 2000). As pointed out earlier, the results on the factor structure of the Rosenberg scale are inconclusive; some researchers find 1 underlying dimension, others find 2. Furthermore, there is considerable debate as to whether the 2 dimensions of the RSE represent a method effect or a substantially meaningful distinction. Therefore, in order to measure positive self-esteem, the positively worded items on the Rosenberg scale were used, whereas to measure negative self-esteem, 5 items from the Piers–Harris children's self-concept scale were used. The response format ranged from "No, certainly not" (1) to "Yes, certainly" (4). The 5 positively worded items were "I am satisfied with myself," "I feel I am a person of worth," "I feel that I have a number of good qualities," "I am able to do things as well as most other people," and "I feel good about myself." The 5 items assessing negative self-esteem were "I often feel sad," "I often forget what I learn," "I am a nervous person," "I am often afraid," and "I feel left out of things." In the questionnaire, the items meant to assess positive and negative self-esteem were presented intermingled. One of our research questions was whether positive and negative self-esteem could be empirically distinguished. Therefore, information about underlying dimensions and reliabilities is presented in the Results section.

Ethnic identification was measured by means of 4 questions (4-point scale) used in previous Dutch research among majority and minority group early adolescents (Verkuyten and Thijs, 2000). The 4 questions were "Is being Turkish (Moroccan) important to you?" "Do you like being Turkish (Moroccan)?" "Do you sometimes regret being Turkish (Moroccan)?" and "Are you proud to be Turkish (Moroccan)?" Reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.71.

In order to measure family integrity, 4 questions (4-point scale) were asked (Huiberts *et al.*, 1999; Triandis *et al.*, 1990; Verkuyten, 2001). All 4 items loaded on 1 factor that explained 38.6% of the variance. The 4 items were "Grandparents should live at home with their family," "Children should live at home with their parents until they get married," "People from the same family should stick together as much as possible," and "One's family is more important than one's friends." Cronbach's alpha was 0.62.

Four questions (5-point scale) were used to measure perceived ethnic discrimination by peers. The participants

were asked to what extent they personally were called names or teased because of their ethnic background. This was asked in connection with school as well as the direct neighborhood. The other 2 questions concerned experiences with social exclusion from play in school and in the neighborhood because of one's ethnicity. Cronbach's alpha was 0.64 with a higher score indicating more perceived ethnic discrimination.

Perceived intergenerational cultural conflict was measured in relation to 5 topics. These topics are related to adaptation to Dutch cultural practices and have been found to be matters of debate in Turkish and Moroccan families (Jong and Verkuyten, 1989). For parents, a favorable attitude toward these issues by their children may represent a process of "Dutchification." The topics were "watching Dutch TV only," "having only Dutch friends," "wanting to have pocket money," "listening to Dutch music only," and "wanting to celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas." For each topic, the participants were asked to indicate to which extent it applied to themselves and how much they thought that their parents liked them doing this. Each question was rated on a 7-point scale of 7 "faces" as developed by Yee and Brown (1992). The faces range from "very happy" to "very sad," with the biggest smile indicating the most positive evaluation, and the biggest frown the most negative one. The 5 children's evaluations were related and Cronbach's alpha turned out to be 0.65. For the parents' perceived evaluations Cronbach's alpha was 0.72. A cultural conflict score was computed by subtracting the parents' evaluations from the children's. A higher score is taken to indicate higher discrepancy or more cultural conflict.

## RESULTS

### Mean Scores of Predictors

Table 1 shows the mean scores for the different measures and for the Turkish and Moroccan participants as 2 groups. On a 4-point scale, the mean scores for ethnic

**Table 1.** Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for the Predictor Measures and for the Group of Turkish and Moroccan Participants

	Turks		Moroccans		F-value
	M	SD	M	SD	
Ethnic identification	3.68	0.45	3.76	0.37	10.53***
Family integrity	3.28	0.58	3.12	0.64	21.03***
Discrimination	1.70	0.76	1.53	0.72	13.84***
Cultural conflict	2.56	0.42	3.13	0.40	4.72*

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

identification and family integrity are high and similar to previous research in the Netherlands (e.g., Verkuyten, 2001). The mean scores for ethnic discrimination are low, however, and the positive scores for cultural conflicts indicate that the children show a greater preference for Dutch cultural practices than their parents.

Differences between the measures have been determined by means of analysis of variance (ANOVA). Subject ethnicity, gender, and age (10–11 and 12–13) were included as factors. The Moroccan participants identified with their group more strongly, and also reported more cultural conflicts with parents than the Turkish ones. In contrast, the Turkish early adolescents valued family integrity more than the Moroccans, and they perceived more ethnic discrimination. In addition, there were 2 gender differences whereby boys scored higher on ethnic identification than girls,  $F(1, 1070) = 4.35, p < 0.05$ , as well as on family integrity,  $F(1, 1070) = 6.52, p < 0.01$ . There were no effects for age, nor were there any significantly higher order interaction effects.

Ethnic identification turned out to be significantly related to family integrity ( $r = 0.14, p < 0.001$ ) and negatively to perceived discrimination ( $r = -0.12, p < 0.001$ ). Family integrity and perceived discrimination were positively related ( $r = 0.10, p < 0.01$ ). Cultural conflict was not significantly related to the other 3 measures. The pattern of correlations was similar for both groups of participants.

### Positive and Negative Self-Esteem<sup>2</sup>

It was expected that positive self-esteem could be empirically distinguished from negative self-esteem. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted in order to determine the dimensions underlying the self-esteem questions. A 2-factor structure emerged. The first factor explained 32.1% of the variance, and the second explained 17.6%. The 5 positive items had a high load on the first factor ( $>0.57$ ). The highest load of these items on the other factor was 0.20. On the second fac-

tor, the 5 negative items had a high load ( $>0.70$ ), with a load of  $<0.16$  on the other factor. Thus, the principal components analysis confirmed that a distinction can indeed be made between positive and negative self-esteem. Hence, the items were summated to compute 2 scales, with a higher score indicating more positive self-esteem and more negative self-esteem, respectively. Cronbach's alpha for the positive self-esteem scale was 0.76, and for the negative self-esteem items it was 0.69. The scales were low but significantly correlated ( $r = -0.21, p < 0.001$ ). The mean score for positive self-esteem ( $M = 3.26, SD = 0.52$ ) was significantly higher than for negative self-esteem ( $M = 2.19, SD = 0.63$ ), and pairwise test of means showed that this difference was significant,  $t(1068) = 39.13, p < 0.000$ .

### Predicting Positive Self-Esteem

In order to predict positive self-esteem, stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed. On the first step, subject ethnicity, gender, and age were included as predictors. Family integrity and ethnic identification were added in the second step. In the third step, perceived discrimination and cultural conflict were included.

The first 3 columns in Table II show the results. On the first step, there is a significant difference in positive self-esteem between Turkish and Moroccan participants. The Turkish early adolescents had a lower score. Gender also shows a significant effect: girls report lower positive self-esteem than boys. Age does not contribute significantly to the explanation of positive self-esteem.

On the second step, the entry of ethnic identification and family integrity accounted for an additional 5% of the variance in positive self-esteem. As expected, both measures had a positive independent effect. The effects for ethnicity and gender remain significant. In the third step, there is a significant negative effect of perceived discrimination and of cultural conflict. Less positive self-esteem was reported by participants who indicated relatively high perceived discrimination and high cultural conflict. The 2 measures together accounted for additional variance in positive self-esteem.

Two additional analyses were performed. First, it was examined whether the predictor variables affected the Turks and the Moroccans in the same way. One significant interaction effect was found ( $\beta = 0.20, p < 0.001$ ). Perceived discrimination had a stronger negative effect on positive self-esteem among the Moroccans than among the Turks. Second, negative self-esteem was entered on the first step as an additional predictor variable. Negative

<sup>2</sup>The fact that the data were collected within school classes may affect the results. Groups in these classes are almost never formed randomly and individuals that belong to the same group will at least share some experiences. Therefore, assumptions of independence of observations are often violated (Kenny and Judd, 1984). The school class may have an effect on global self-esteem, making multiple regression analysis, analysis of variance, or some other standard statistical method not the appropriate technique for analyzing the data. However, using multilevel analysis, we found in previous studies no significant between-school-class variances in global self-esteem (see Verkuyten, 2001). Therefore, we analyzed the data using standard least-squares multiple regression analysis and not multilevel models.

**Table II.** Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Positive and Negative Self-esteem (Standardized Regression Coefficients, Beta)

	Positive self-esteem			Negative self-esteem		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Moroccan	0.12***	0.13***	0.13***	-0.13***	-0.11***	-0.10***
Girls	-0.11***	-0.07*	-0.08**	0.17***	0.19***	0.18***
Age	0.06	0.05	0.05	-0.06	-0.05	-0.05
Ethnic identification		0.14***	0.12***		-0.05	-0.05
Family integrity		0.16***	0.18***		0.14***	0.11**
Discrimination			-0.14***			0.22***
Cultural conflict			-0.09**			0.15***
Multiple <i>r</i>	0.18***	0.29***	0.33***	0.22***	0.26***	0.37***
<i>R</i> square change	0.03***	0.05***	0.03***	0.05***	0.02**	0.07***

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

self-esteem was a significant predictor but, importantly, did not affect the results for the other variables.

### Predicting Negative Self-Esteem

The last 3 columns in Table II show the results for the stepwise multiple regression analysis predicting negative self-esteem. As with positive self-esteem, the first step shows a significant difference in negative self-esteem between Turkish and Moroccan participants, with the Turks scoring higher on negative self-esteem. Gender also shows a significant effect with girls reporting higher negative self-esteem than boys. Again, age does not contribute significantly to the explanation of negative self-esteem.

On the second step, the entry of ethnic identification and family integrity accounted for additional variance in negative self-esteem. Unexpectedly, family integrity had a positive effect. That is, higher family integrity turned out to be related to a higher score on negative self-esteem. The effects for ethnicity and gender remain significant. In the third step, an additional 5% of the variance in negative self-esteem was accounted for. As expected, both perceived discrimination and cultural conflict were related to negative self-esteem. Thus, participants who indicated relatively high perceived discrimination and high intergenerational cultural conflict reported more negative self-esteem. The total amount of variance explained after the third step is similar to that of positive self-esteem.

In an additional analysis it was examined whether the predictor variables had similar effects for the Turks and the Moroccans. No significant interaction effects were found. Hence, for the 2 ethnic groups, the different variables appeared to have similar effects on negative self-esteem. Furthermore, the inclusion of positive self-esteem as an

additional predictor did not affect the results for the other variables.

### DISCUSSION

This large-scale study among Turkish and Moroccan early adolescents living in the Netherlands has tried to go beyond the existing research on ethnicity and global self-esteem by focusing on both the positive and negative dimensions of self-esteem. Furthermore, in trying to combine ideas from social psychology and cross-cultural psychology, social and cultural sources were included, as well as threats to global feelings of self-worth.

In agreement with other studies (e.g., Bachman and O'Malley, 1986; Carmines and Zeller, 1979; Farruggia *et al.*, 2001; Owens, 1993, 1994; Tafarodi and Swann, 1995), a positive and negative dimension was found, and both dimensions shared only a limited amount of variance (4%). This result suggests that it cannot simply be assumed that global self-esteem is a unidimensional construct, and also that the relations between the positive and negative dimensions of self-esteem and relevant correlates should be examined. For example, numerous studies in various countries have found no difference in the global self-esteem of ethnic majority and minority members (see Gray-Little and Hafdahl, 2000, for a recent review). However, practically all of these studies have treated self-esteem as unidimensional, and have not investigated positive and negative self-esteem separately. However, ethnicity may be related differently to each dimensions. That is, ethnic majority and minority adolescents may have similar levels of positive self-esteem but ethnic minorities may have more negative self-esteem.

However, it could be argued that the finding for positive and negative self-esteem is due to the fact that the



items were drawn from 2 different scales. Furthermore, the items for assessing negative self-esteem could be considered more as indicators of internalized problems and therefore as outcomes and correlates of low self-esteem. However, the self-esteem items used were drawn from 2 similar and acknowledged inventories that range among the 4 most used instruments for assessing self-esteem (Gray-Little and Hafdahl, 2000). In addition, the present results are similar to those of other studies that distinguish between positive and negative self-esteem (e.g., Owens, 1993, 1994). However, future studies could examine positive and negative self-esteem among ethnic minorities by using items from a single scale.

In the present study, it was expected that ethnic identification and family integrity serve as sources for global self-esteem. For ethnic identification, the results are in agreement with this expectation. In social psychology, social identity theory predicts that in response to their low status position, minority group members will stress their ethnic identity by emphasizing their desirable distinctions (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Hence, ethnic minority identity can protect global self-esteem or serve as a source (Branscombe *et al.*, 1999; Phinney *et al.*, 1997; Rowley *et al.*, 1998). However, ethnic identification turned out to be related only to positive and not to negative self-esteem. Thus, a strong ethnic identity seems to contribute to enhanced positive global self-esteem but does not result in improved negative self-esteem or reduced self-depreciation. This suggests that ethnic identification does not protect self-esteem but rather serves as a source for self-worth. Hence, in contrast to what is sometimes assumed, ethnic identity does not have to be a burden but can contribute to global feelings of self-worth (Porter and Washington, 1993).

In cross-cultural psychology, the focus is on cultural characteristics and values and not so much on status differences. That is, what is emphasized is the ethnic aspect of ethnic minorities. The present study examined the role of family integrity, particularly for early adolescents, as an important aspect of collectivism. Family integrity was found to be related to positive self-esteem, supporting the idea that family support and involvement is central for the development of feelings of self-worth (Harter, 1999).

Unexpectedly, family integrity was also related to negative self-esteem. Participants who valued family integrity more had *higher* negative self-esteem. Thus, family integrity contributed to enhanced positive as well as negative self-esteem. Hence, family integrity seems to be not only a source but also a burden for self-esteem. A possible reason is that for ethnic minority adolescents, the endorsement of family integrity involves not just family support and involvement but also cultural discrepancies

and conflicts. In several studies ethnic minority (early) adolescents have been found to value family integrity more strongly than their Dutch contemporaries (e.g., Huiberts *et al.*, 1999; Verkuyten, 2001; Verkuyten and Masson, 1996), and, generally speaking, Turks and Moroccans are more collectivist than the Dutch (Hofstede, 1980). Thus, the collectivist values minority groups endorse at home differ from the values of the dominant group. This may lead to conflicting demands and feelings of confusion, resulting in enhanced negative self-esteem.

The fact that cultural conflicts may affect negative self-esteem adversely is shown by the result for perceived parent-child discrepancies in the attitude toward Dutch cultural practices. A stronger discrepancy was related to reduced positive self-esteem and enhanced negative self-esteem. Immigrant (early) adolescents often adapt faster than their parents to the values and practices of the dominant society. This dissonant acculturation (Portes, 1997) may lead to conflicts over cultural values and practices, particularly because the collectivist norms of respect for elders and obedience to parents make parent-child discrepancies less acceptable (e.g., Phinney *et al.*, 2000; Szapocznik and Kurtens, 1993). These conflicts can lead to greater dissatisfaction (Rosenthal *et al.*, 1996), and the present results show that perceived intergenerational discrepancies in cultural adaptation are a burden for global feelings of self-worth.

In addition to cultural conflicts, negative social conditions also affect self-esteem adversely. This is evident from the result for perceived ethnic discrimination by peers that was related to positive and negative self-esteem. Discrimination had a depreciating effect on positive self-esteem and enhanced negative self-esteem. These results for cultural conflict and ethnic discrimination lead to 2 conclusions.

First, in order to come to an understanding of the development of global feelings of self-worth of minority group youth, explicit attention should be paid to negative social circumstances, as well as to cultural conflicts with parents and cultural differences between society as a whole and the minority group. It is important to take both kinds of factors into account simultaneously. Typically, research on ethnic minority youth focuses either on negative social circumstances and minority status or on cultural characteristics and acculturation changes. The former aspect is predominantly studied in social psychology whereas cross-cultural psychology focuses on the latter aspect. However, both social psychological and cross-cultural approaches are valuable frameworks for examining the psychological well-being of minority adolescents. Therefore, more research combining these approaches is needed. For example, discrimination can

be examined as an important condition for acculturation (Berry, 1990) and cultural differences can affect the perception and interpretation of discrimination (Ogbu, 1993).

A second conclusion is that the results suggest that there is an asymmetry of positive and negative events for the development of self-esteem (Leary and Baumeister, 2000; Rozin and Royzman, 2001). In general, favorable events are pleasant and have an impact on positive feelings in particular. Negative events and experiences, however, are much rarer and typically have a more generalized emotional impact. The present findings (partly) support this asymmetry because discrimination and cultural conflict affected both positive and negative self-esteem adversely, whereas ethnic identity was only related to positive self-esteem.

The different predictor variables showed similar associations with both positive and negative self-esteem for each group of early adolescents. The one exception was the stronger aversive effect of discrimination on the Moroccans' positive self-esteem. This pattern of results suggests that the global self-esteem of the 2 minority groups are influenced by similar matters and in similar ways. In addition to associations between measures, absolute levels may be examined. In this study, the results show that the Turks, compared to the Moroccans, valued family integrity more and experienced more ethnic discrimination, whereas the Moroccans reported more cultural differences with their parents and identified more strongly with their ethnic group. Hence, there were group differences that should be taken into account when examining the situation of different minority groups and the psychological well-being of ethnic minority early adolescents.

In addition, there are individual differences—such as experiences with discrimination and in collectivism—that highlight the need to examine distinctions among youth within the same ethnic group. Attention to between-group differences should not lead to overlooking within-group heterogeneity. Hence, for understanding the development of ethnic minority youth it is necessary to pay attention to within-group differences, in addition to differences between ethnic minority groups. Furthermore, there are also differences between the majority group and ethnic minorities, and there are basic capacities and tendencies that pervade across ethnic lines. In addition, there are not only ethnic distinctions but also differences associated with other important characteristics, such as gender.

It turned out there were several gender differences. Boys had a higher score on ethnic identification than girls, as well as on family integrity. A possible explanation of the former is that boys are more concerned with differences in status and prestige that are found in groups (Cross and

Madson, 1997). The latter may be due to the fact that family integrity is very much a male responsibility in Islamic cultures. Gender also showed an effect for both positive and negative self-esteem. On both dimensions, girls had a more unfavorable score than boys. This result is in agreement with a recent meta-analysis that found a consistent difference in favor of males from early adolescence on (see Kling *et al.*, 1999). The fact that in the present study a similar gender difference was found suggests that more general developmental and societal factors are important. Kling *et al.* (1999) discuss several more general explanations for this gender difference such as different gender roles and the general emphasis on girls' physical appearance. Harter (1999) found that lower perceptions of girls of their attractiveness contribute to a lower global self-esteem. Others have argued and shown that by early adolescence, gender inequality in society, demanding role expectations, and early pubertal development have already left their mark on the global self-esteem of particularly girls (Simmons and Blyth, 1987). However, it is possible that the lower self-esteem of girls requires another explanation among particular minority groups, such as the Turks and Moroccans. The role and position of women in Islamic cultures differ in many respects from what is typically expected in western Europe and North America. For example, Turkish and Moroccan girls may have to cope with more traditional gender roles, whereas majority group girls may experience more pressures regarding appearance.

To conclude, using data from a large-scale study, the present paper has demonstrated that it is useful to distinguish between positive and negative self-esteem when studying global self-esteem among ethnic minority early adolescent. Both dimensions are relatively independent and it turns out that sources tend to be more related to positive self-esteem, whereas threats appear to be related to both positive and negative self-esteem. Examining both dimensions as well as the differential resources and threats improves our understanding of the way early adolescents from ethnic minority groups develop an overall evaluation of themselves. There are some limitations in the present research, however, which could be addressed by future studies. The causal direction of the effects, for example, could not be determined. Global self-esteem was treated as the dependent variable, but it may also affect, for example, ethnic identification or perceived discrimination. In addition, the positive and negative self-esteem items were taken from 2 different scales and future studies could examine both dimensions by using more similar items. Furthermore, constructs such as ethnic identity, perceived discrimination, and intergenerational cultural conflict are multifaceted, and their

various aspects or components may be related differently to global self-esteem. In order to obtain a clear picture of the effect of these factors on the positive and negative self-esteem of minority group members, further research needs to look at such aspects as knowledge about one's group, changing family roles, and the extent of discrimination of group members.

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